

PART IV

THE PATTERN OF AGRICULTURE

Number and Size of Farms

As the spread of railroads brought increased interest in agriculture, farm numbers in Adams County increased from 783 in 1900 to 1,263 in 1910. Lower wheat prices, drought, and depression then caused a reduction that lasted until 1945. Sub-marginal farms were abandoned; others were consolidated into larger holdings. There were 597 farms in the county in 1945 and a few more by 1950. The number then increased during the 1950's as farmland in the new irrigation project was bought by the government and resold in smaller units. Adams County, with 786 farms in 1959, ranked 24th statewide.

As virgin land was broken to the plow in the years from 1900 to 1910 the proportion of the county area in farms doubled. Average farm size also increased during this development period, rising from 632 to 776 acres. Consolidation of farms into larger holdings caused the average size to continue to increase until 1950 when it reached 1,835 acres. Irrigation and the subdivision of farms within the Columbia Basin Project area then brought a reduction in average farm acreage during the 1950's. The farm average dropped to 1,370 acres by 1959 but only one other county in Washington (Franklin) surpassed Adams in farm size.

Although the trend is toward more and smaller farms in irrigated areas, the majority of Adams County's agricultural land has been, and continues to be, in large holdings. Of 1,076,960 acres of farmland in 1959, 84 percent was in 338 farms having at least 1,000 acres. Fifty-eight percent was held by 143 farms of 2,000 acres or more. Most of the county's large farms are in dryland wheat areas. Only six farms reported irrigating 500 acres or more in 1959 and three irrigated 1,000 acres or more.

Table 10. Number, Size and Total Acreage of Adams County Farms, 1900-1959

Year	Total Farms in the County	Average size of farms in the County (acres)	Total County Area in farms (acres)	Percent of County area in Farms
1900	783	631.5	494,452	40.4
1910	1,263	775.5	979,455	80.0
1920	1,084	865.7	938,395	76.7
1930	818	1,230.5	1,006,582	82.3
1940	651	1,477.0	961,557	79.3
1945	597	1,767.6	1,055,281	87.0
1950	602	1,834.6	1,104,425	91.1
1954	639	1,616.7	1,033,088	85.2
1959	786	1,370.2	1,076,960	88.8

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture.

Table 11. Number of Farms, Land in Farms and Value of Livestock and Crops Sold Off Farms, Washington Counties - 1959

County	Number of Farms	All Land in Farms (acres)	Value of all Crops Sold Off Farms (dollars)	Value of all Livestock and their Products Sold Off Farms (dollars)
Adams	786	1,076,960	21,055,532	3,547,300
Asotin	325	364,405	2,589,582	1,179,464
Benton	1,281	562,809	12,912,165	3,958,996
Chelan	1,636	215,646	16,877,563	660,083
Clallam	724	68,739	706,055	2,858,512
Clark	2,778	188,479	3,020,725	8,222,499
Columbia	333	359,134	9,778,027	1,148,786
Cowlitz	1,014	80,176	1,022,291	2,808,884
Douglas	935	1,012,561	12,985,276	1,067,743
Ferry	283	298,247	396,384	931,057
Franklin	742	590,027	10,305,160	3,596,711
Garfield	274	344,094	6,871,789	898,109
Grant	1,497	1,075,642	26,083,038	12,555,694
Grays Harbor	896	99,529	924,067	2,639,777
Island	493	38,702	515,863	1,909,572
Jefferson	266	35,123	212,568	758,107
King	2,952	114,719	6,240,212	14,298,190
Kitsap	906	29,776	437,819	1,374,547
Kittitas	905	580,035	2,961,833	10,945,370
Klickitat	741	960,614	3,859,102	3,083,797
Lewis	2,230	255,012	1,893,636	7,935,581
Lincoln	959	1,422,981	21,035,259	3,253,383
Mason	328	35,518	202,594	728,250
Okanogan	1,762	2,048,406	10,681,584	5,723,537
Pacific	499	53,348	819,224	1,086,617
Pend Oreille	366	124,239	265,001	1,222,488
Pierce	2,535	153,363	4,928,685	10,850,000
San Juan	209	45,707	91,694	595,403
Skagit	1,740	141,770	6,722,958	9,167,984
Skamania	177	20,177	283,595	259,736
Snohomish	2,919	148,604	2,788,695	12,899,240
Spokane	2,990	822,008	15,091,158	8,403,816
Stevens	1,608	803,776	3,836,457	5,676,015
Thurston	1,220	142,170	1,952,408	5,835,930
Wahkiakum	302	26,299	174,415	1,052,642
Walla Walla	981	822,729	19,957,499	4,228,801
Whatcom	3,151	185,045	3,943,630	17,706,625
Whitman	1,824	1,485,709	43,632,434	7,398,484
Yakima	6,010	1,884,694	75,760,207	32,919,536
State Total	51,577	18,716,972	353,816,184	215,388,266

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture, 1959.

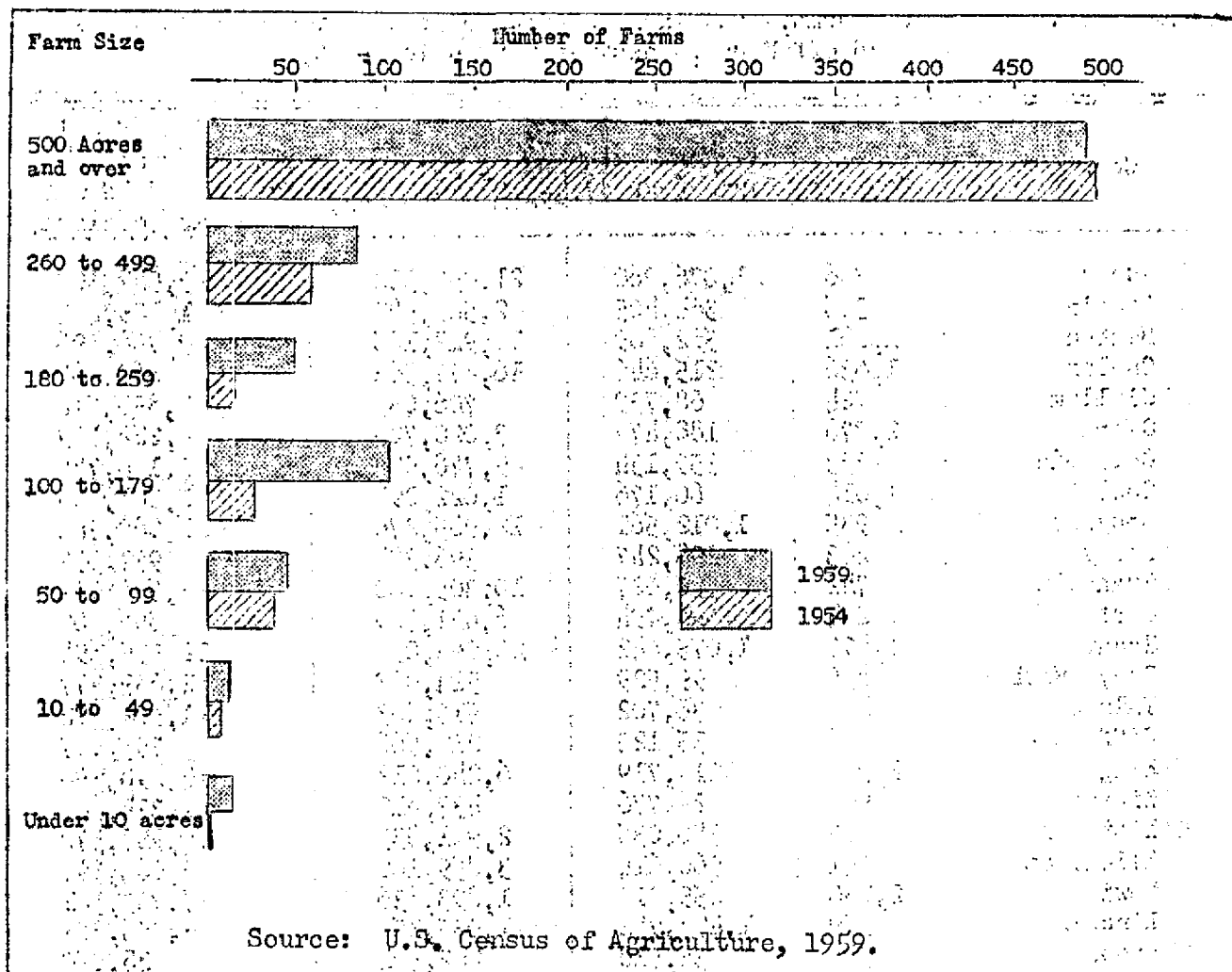


Figure 6. Number and Size of Adams County Farms, 1954 and 1959.

Types of Farms

Grain farming dominates Adams County's agricultural activities. Cash-grain farms went from 565 in 1954 to 595 in 1959. Their proportion compared to all farms, however, decreased from 88 to 76 percent during the same period because of the increase in farm types brought on by irrigation. All other types increased both in number and percentage from 1954 to 1959. The trend in farm numbers does not necessarily indicate trend in acreage, however, because of changing farm size.

Utilization of Farmland

Of the county's 1,212,800 acres, 89 percent was in farmland in 1959—a figure surpassed only in four other Washington counties. Harvested cropland that year was 399,033 acres (37 percent of all farmland) and Adams ranked third statewide in this respect. Pasture, including cropland and woodland used for pasture, accounted for 25 percent of all farm acreage. Summer fallow and other land took up the remaining 38 percent.

Table 12. Types of Farms, Adams County, 1959

Type of farms ^{1/}	Number of farms		Percent of all farms in the County	
	1954	1959	1954	1959
Total farms in county ^{2/}	639	786	--	--
Field crop farms	570	628	89.2	80.0
Cash-grain	565	595	88.4	75.7
Other field-crop	5	33	0.8	4.2
Vegetable farms	0	0	0	0
Fruit-and-nut farms	0	0	0	0
Poultry farms	0	0	0	0
Dairy farms	0	1	0	0.1
Livestock farms other than poultry and dairy	17	55	2.7	7.0
General farms	2	56	0.3	7.1
Miscellaneous and unclassified farms	5	16	0.8	2.0

^{1/} Data are estimates made for all farms upon the basis of tabulation of data for a sample of approximately one-fifth of all farms. These estimates are subject to sampling errors and will not agree exactly with totals obtained by the tabulation of data for all farms.

^{2/} The definition used for a farm in 1959 is more restrictive than that used for 1954 and part of the changes in the number of farms from 1954 to 1959 resulted from the change in definition. Reduction in number of farms due to change for Adams County between 1954 and 1959 is 7.

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture.

Farm Values

Farm value (land and buildings) increased greatly after the turn of the century, averaging \$1,963 per farm in 1900 and \$20,668 ten years later. The trend continued upward during the following decade, although at a slower rate. It then went down slightly during the 1920's. In 1940 average farm value was \$32,112 and by 1950 it had tripled to \$105,310 with the promise of irrigation development on Columbia Basin Project lands. Values continued to increase during the 1950's and in 1959 the average Adams County farm was worth \$133,626 (\$89,551 above the state average). Values on a per acres basis have generally followed a similar pattern, going from \$7.86 in 1900 to \$36.70 in 1920, dropping to \$21.74 in 1940, then increasing again. Farmland, including buildings, was worth an average \$102.15 in 1959, \$46.59 below the state average. This reflects large acreages in dryland wheat farms and masks the presence of high priced land in irrigated sections.

Irrigation

The number of irrigated farms rose from 11 in 1950 to 127 in 1954. By 1959 the total was up to 321, which was 41 percent of all county farms. Irrigated farms in 1959 contained 359,250 acres, or 33 percent of all farmland in the county. However, only 48,280 acres actually were irrigated. Of the 111,874 acres in cropland harvested on irrigated farms, 44,752 acres were irrigated. When compared with the 657 acres of irrigated cropland harvested in 1950 this illustrates the impact

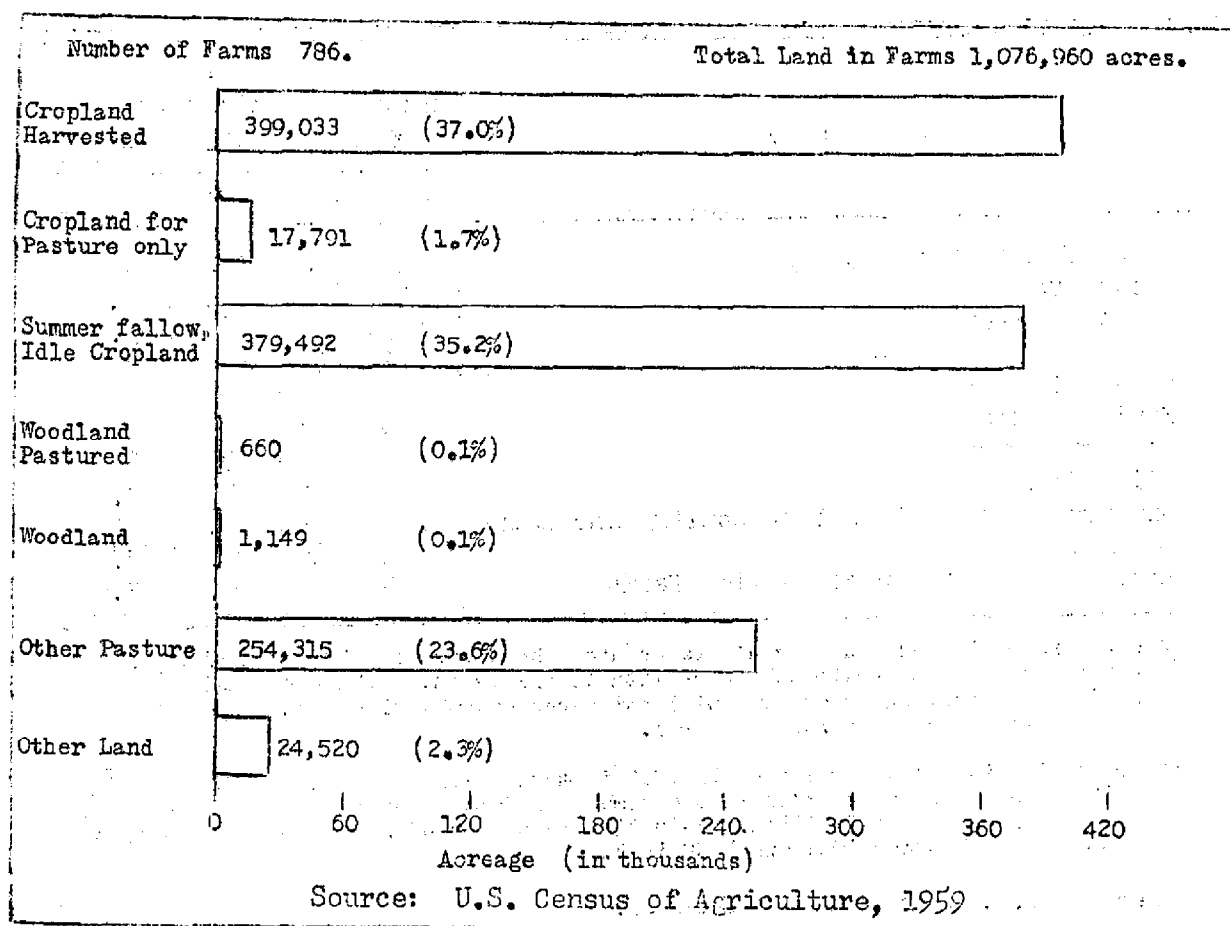


Figure 7. Utilization of Farmland in Adams County, 1959.

of the Columbia Basin Project. Most irrigated farms (77 percent) watered between 50 and 500 acres. Irrigated farms averaged 1,119 acres each in 1959, indicating the majority of land in these farms is not actually under irrigation.

Table 13. Value of Farmland and Buildings
Adams County, 1900-1959. ^{1/}

Year	County Average Values		Value of all Farmland and Buildings (dollars)
	Per farm (dollars)	Per acre (dollars)	
1900	4,963	7.86	3,885,950
1910	20,668	26.65	26,103,779
1920	31,767	36.70	34,435,448
1930	28,096	22.83	22,982,528
1940	32,112	21.74	20,904,912
1950	105,310	54.57	63,396,620
1954	130,677	82.50	83,502,603
1959	133,626	102.15	105,030,036

^{1/} Data are based on reports for a sample of farms.

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture.

Table 14. Cropland on Irrigated Farms, Adams County, 1959, 1954, 1950

Item	1959	1954	1950
Number of irrigated farms	321	127	11
Cropland harvested from irrigated farms (acres)	111,874	49,531	4,372
Land irrigated (acres)	48,200	10,959	1,237
Irrigated cropland harvested (acres)	44,752	9,898	657
Pastured cropland on irrigated farms (acres)	13,547	1,530	740
All land in irrigated farms (acres)	359,250	205,654	88,985

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture.

Farm Tenure and Residence

The proportion of farms under full ownership, where the owner operates only the land he owns, fluctuated between 20 and 27 percent from 1925 to 1959. Farms operated by part owners who operated the land they owned and also rented land from others, increased from 31 percent in 1925 to 43 percent in 1959. The proportion run by tenants who rent from the owners or work on shares has generally decreased, from 43 percent in 1925 to 30 percent in 1959. Managers who work for wages operate very few farms in Adams County--only two in 1959.

Table 15. Farm Operators, Number and Percent of Farms by Tenure of Operator, Adams County, 1925-1959.

Year	Number of Farms in County	Number of Farms				Percent of all Farms			
		Full Owners	Part Owners	Managers	Tenants	Full Owners	Part Owners	Managers	Tenants
1925	817	198	250	21	348	24.2	30.6	2.6	42.6
1930	818	184	272	9	353	22.5	33.3	1.1	43.2
1935	755	167	236	9	343	22.1	31.3	1.2	45.4
1940	651	153	242	16	240	23.5	37.2	2.5	36.9
1945	597	119	225	7	246	19.9	37.7	1.2	41.2
1950	602	128	224	3	247	21.3	37.2	0.5	41.0
1954	639	153	241	4	241	23.9	37.7	0.6	37.7
1959	786	213	341	2	230	27.1	43.4	0.3	29.3

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture

Land in farms by tenure of operator gives a different picture than that shown by farm numbers. The 1959 Census of Agriculture showed 683,312 acres, or 64 percent of all farmland in the county, as operated by part owners. This indicates that although only 44 percent of the farms are under part ownership these tend to be the larger farms. Full owners in 1959, although having 27 percent of the farms, operated only 13 percent of the land in farms.

Eighty percent of farm operators in the county in 1959 lived on their farms while the other 20 percent lived either in other rural residences or in town. Operators who worked off their farms at least part-time numbered 247, and 108 of these spent 100 days or more at off-farm work. Income from non-farm sources exceeded that from sale of farm products for 66 operators.

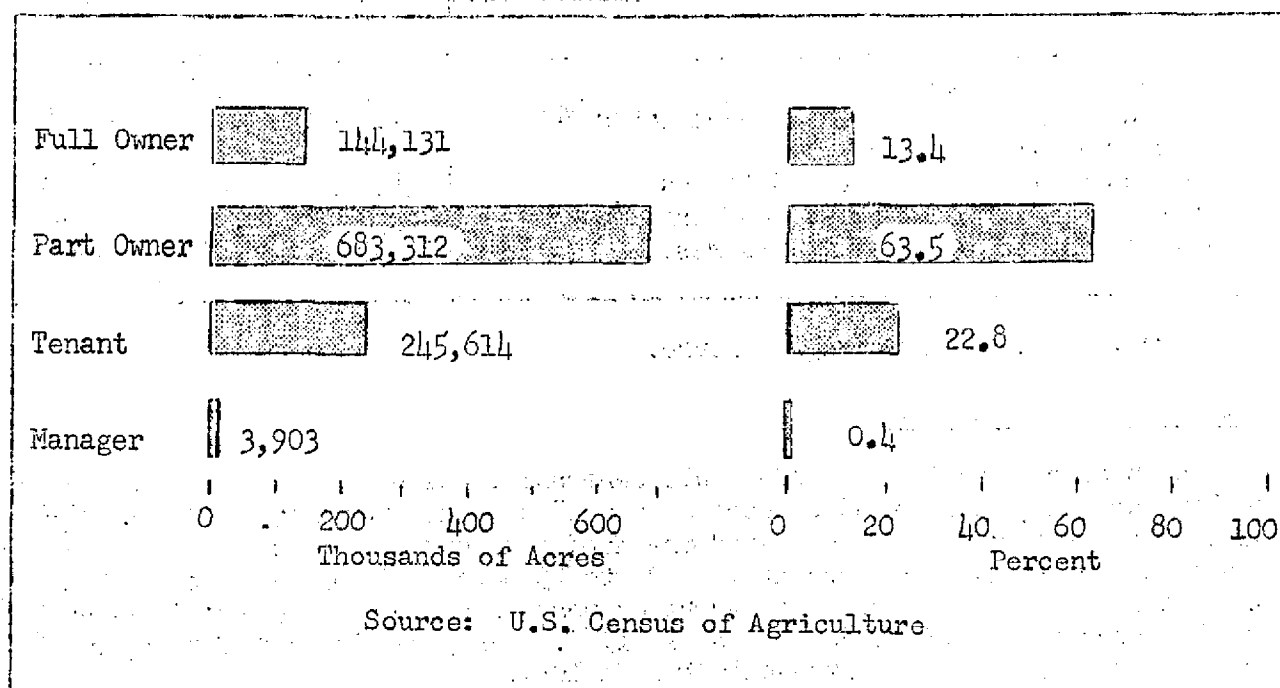


Figure 8. Land in Farms, by Tenure of Operator, Adams County, 1959.

Facilities and Equipment

As farming becomes more and more mechanized, a farmer's production capability and standard of living are reflected in the facilities and equipment at his disposal. Comparison of Adams County with all Washington farms with respect to non-specialized items in 1959 shows proportionally more Adams County farms with telephones, home freezers, motortrucks, tractors and automobiles.

A look at more specialized equipment shows a higher percentage of Adams County farmers having grain combines, corn pickers, pick-up balers, crawler tractors, and power operated elevators, conveyors and blowers. This reflects the greater emphasis on grain and other field crops as compared with the state as a whole. Fewer farms in the county have milking equipment, percentagewise, as dairying is a minor industry.

Table 16. Specified Facilities and Equipment on Farms in Adams County, 1959. ^{1/}

Facility or Equipment Item	Number of Farms Using		Percent of Farms in County Equipped		Percent of All Farms in State Equipped
	1959	1954	1959	1954	1959
Telephone	682	511	90.2	86.0	85.5
Home freezer	638	433	84.4	72.9	61.1
Milking machine	20	10	2.6	1.7	19.9
Electric milk cooler	6	no data	0.8	--	11.8
Crop drier (for grain, forage or other crops)	2	no data	0.3	--	0.8
Power operated elevator, conveyor or blower	442	no data	58.5	--	18.4
Grain combines	588	533	77.8	89.7	16.6
Corn pickers	16	1	2.1	0.2	0.8
Pick up baler	141	29	18.6	4.9	15.4
Field forage harvester	31	20	4.1	3.4	6.6
Motortrucks	724	570	95.8	96.0	72.2
Tractors	734	574	97.1	96.7	82.6
Crawler tractors	502	519	66.4	87.4	21.3
Automobiles	718	572	95.0	96.3	89.7

^{1/} Data are based on reports for a sample of farms.

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1959.